

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Istook Pushes E-Filing for Farmers

Washington, D.C. -- Yesterday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed, 397 to 1, the Freedom to E-File Act which would allow farmers and ranchers to file paperwork with the U.S. Department of Agriculture electronically.

Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) was an original cosponsor of the House version of the bill. Istook commented, **“Every part of our economy is moving to the greater efficiency and productivity made possible by the Internet. Farmers and ranchers shouldn’t be left behind.”**

The measure requires that the Secretary of Agriculture establish a user-friendly system to allow the electronic filing of all required USDA paperwork. The bill would also allow public access to information on farm programs, quarterly trade, economic and production reports, and other similar information. Within 180 days of enactment, a system must be in place to allow farmers to download forms from the Internet and submit completed and modified forms. Within two years, the system must be fully operational, allowing farmers to retrieve and file all relevant forms with USDA.

“This legislation will help reduce the paperwork burden for many Oklahomans,” said Istook. **“With millions of Americans filling their taxes and other forms online this year, there’s no reason why farmers and ranchers shouldn’t have the same opportunity.”**